Sir Richard Cocks's HIS Farewel SERMON;

SHEWING,

The CHRISTIAN RELIGION WAS NOT Introduced by POWER and FORCE, NOR Eſtabliſhed by VIOLENCE.

Acts xxiv. 13. *Neither can they prove the Things, whereof they now accuſe me.*

Ver. 14. *But this I confeſs unto thee, That after the Way which they call Hereſy, ſo worſhip I the God of my Fathers, believing all Things which are written in the Law and the Prophets.*

Ver. 15. *And have Hope towards God, which they themſelves alſo allow, that there ſhall be a Reſurrection of the Dead, both of the Juſt and Unjuſt:*

Ver. 16. *And herein do I exerciſe my ſelf, to have always a Conſcience void of Offence towards God and towards Man.*

LONDON,

Printed for J. ROBERTS, *in* Warwick-Lane; A. DODD, *without* Temple-Bar; *and* J. FOX, *in* Weſtminſter-Hall. MDCCXXII.

Price Six Pence.

CHRISTIAN READER,

I Have in my former Papers ſhewed thee the Excellency, Verity, and Perfection of our Holy Religion, which receives no Advantage from the Arts and Pretences of thoſe that tell us of the Power that is delegated to them from Heaven. One eminent Divine, lately quoted by an Author as eminent as himſelf, tells us, Heaven waits and expects the Prieſt's Sentence on Earth; the Lord follows the Servant; and what the Servant rightly binds on Earth, the Lord confirms in Heaven. *Theſe high Flights are inculcated and impreſſed upon the tender Minds of the Youth they educate: From hence come Bigots, and not a few Atheiſts; obſerving the Cheats that have been inſtilled into them in their Youth, when they have overcome the Abſurdities of their Education, they vainly conclude all Religion to be Cheat and Prieſt-Craft. But the more conſiderate know our Religion conſiſts not in empty Shews, or Myſteries to be performed by its Prieſts; it is a Religion that is pure, eaſily underſtood, worthy of God the Inſtitutor of it; the End and Deſign of it is to make Men eaſy and*

useful to one another in this World, and eternally happy in the next.

All our Jars, Diſſenſions, and Ill-Will to each other, are the Tares the Enemy hath ſown in the large Fields of Envy, Pride, Ambition, and Covetouſneſs; very proper Soil to give Growth and Nouriſhment to ſuch dangerous and fruitful Weeds. It is the Intereſt as well as the Duty of the Magiſtrate to have the People, committed to his Charge, to be well inſtructed in the Chriſtian Religion: For good Chriſtians make the beſt Subjects.

The Sum of the Chriſtian Religion is, To believe what is contained in the Apoſtles *Creed, to love God above all Things, and our Neighbour as our ſelves; to be initiated in Chriſt's Church by Baptiſm, and to be worthy Partakers of the Lord's Supper; to be obedient to our Governors in all lawful Commands, and be reſpectful to Superiors; and eſpecially to be obſervant of thoſe whom Authority has ſeparated and appointed to officiate and inſtruct us in Holy Things: And they ought to be very circumſpect in their Lives, Examples of Virtue and Piety; and that will make their great Office venerable, and more eſteemed, than the vain empty Pretences of a Succeſſion from the Apoſtles.*

We want a ſecond Reformation. Nothing is perfect, as the firſt Reformers obſerved, at firſt. This will be evident, if we reflect upon the Corruption, Filth, and Naſtineſs, that the Prieſts had mingled with, defiled, and defaced, our holy Religion; for at that Time it was called indeed Chriſtian, but upon Examination it will appear more like the old Pagan. The cunning Prieſts did all that in them lay to oppoſe the Reformation; the Politicks and private Views of ſome who promoted the Reformation, prevailed further with them than a true Zeal for Religion; and the World was in a kind of Lethargy, the Neceſſity and Greatneſs of the Work almoſt confounding them. And in Two Centuries ſome Errors may have crept in, which may want a ſecond Re-

formation. The ableſt and beſt of our firſt Reformers, told us, That the Scripture did not mention, or explain, what a Sacrament was; and that where the Word Sacrament was ever uſed in the Latin Text, it was in the Greek μυστήριον, myſterium. Now thoſe that call themſelves Prieſts tell us, not only that Baptiſm and the Supper of the Lord are neceſſary to our Salvation (which is Truth) but alſo that they are Sacraments, viz. Myſteries of ſuch a Nature, that they cannot be beneficially adminiſtred by any Hand, but that which can derive a Miſſion, in a direct Line, from the Apoſtles. By which Aſſertion they not only in an uncharitable and unchriſtian Manner exclude all the Proteſtant Diſſenters of this Nation, but alſo all other Proteſtant Foreigners, from all Hopes and Means of Salvation. This is, ſurely, too harſh to be true, or warranted by the Word of God. Their Definition of a Sacrament to ſupport their Purpoſes is abſtruſe and unintelligible; but by theſe Charms and Arts they delude the World. Though, perhaps, many of them may be excuſable, becauſe they know no better, being educated themſelves as they educate the Youth under their Care. Theſe wrong Notions and imperfect Ideas of theſe Things of the greateſt Conſequence being early imprinted on them, there are very few ever after capable of taking true Impreſſions. By theſe Means they lay dangerous and ſtrong Foundations of Animoſities amongſt Proteſtants, who ſhould live in Love, in Peace, Unity, and Charity, as Brethren and Chriſtians; and unite againſt the Papiſt, the common Enemy to them and the Chriſtian Religion. The Receiving the Sacrament kneeling, ſince the Papiſts have made a God of it, and adore the Bread, may be altered: And the rather becauſe it was not ſo uſed at the Inſtitution, nor in the Primitive Times, till after Errors and Hereſies invaded the Church. The pretended Prieſts giving the Bread and Wine with their own Hand to every Communicant, and repeating the ſame Words, is tireſome and uneaſy, and not primitive. This was an Invention to

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make the People believe the peculiar Receiving the Bread and Wine from their Hands made it only beneficial. Tho' it is past all Contradiction, That the sincere Mind, and holy Disposition of the Receiver, not the Words or Hand of the Giver, only makes it the more or the less beneficial. We disown Transubstantiation, and yet we receive the Sacrament in an adoring Posture; we call the Pope Antichrist, and the Papists Idolaters; and yet from them do we derive our spiritual Pedigree, to support our Divine Mission. On a pretended Conversion, we admit their Priests to officiate in our Churches; when, at the same Time, we should believe our Religion defiled, our Churches profaned, should any of the best Protestant Divines, if a Dissenter at home, or ordained by the Reformed Protestants abroad, enter our Churches, and officiate without Re-Ordination. When we baptize, we sign the Baptized with the Sign of the Popish Deity, The Cross: Surely the Sign of the Spear, or the Nails, would be as much to the Purpose; and this had better be altered. We see the holy Salutations, the Deaconesses, &c. were omitted, though very primitive, for the Inconveniencies that attended them, and, it may be, they had not more Reasons to omit those, than we have these. I may say of these Things, as the Bishop of Bangor *does of the Practices of some towards the Revolution, It betrays some Consciousness that all is not easy; it encourages the Papist, it discourages the honest Protestant, and gives Occasion to the Bigot to say, He had rather be a Papist than a Presbyterian. It is true, we do make some little Excuses for these Things; but it has been an other Occasions observed, That when a Man, accused of any Crime, makes but an indifferent Excuse, confesses himself guilty.* If a Man seeth thee that hast Knowledge, sit at Meat in an Idol's Temple, shall not the Conscience of him that is weak be emboldened to eat those Things that are offered to Idols; and thro' thy Knowledge thy weak Brother perish, for whom Christ died? *Some of our great Preferments occasion Envy, and make the Possessors envied, or censured for Covetous-*

ness,

neſs, or Extravagancy. Some are ſo mean, they make the Poſſeſſors indigent and contemptible. I will not pretend to ſay any Thing is too much for holy Men, that have an Heart and Knowledge to uſe it as becomes Men in ſuch great Stations; but I am aſſured that it is too little that will not ſupply Neceſſaries and Conveniencies of Life for a good Manager, and a prudent Family. The Non-Reſidence of Biſhops, Clergymens Pluralities, and holding by Commendam, and the infamous Practices of the Ch-nc-ll-rs Courts, make our Religion have a Look like Popery, viz. That the End of the Chriſtian Religion was rather to make the Prieſt rich and great, than the People true Chriſtians and religious.

Theſe Things certainly require a ſecond and more ſtrict Reformation.

In Queen Anne's Reign, when I ſaw that unhappy Princeſs deluded by ambitious Clergymen, and Atheiſts, their inſeparable Companions, endeavouring to ruin herſelf, and the Proteſtant Intereſt, and to demoliſh thoſe Trophies and Glories, which had once made her the moſt celebrated Princeſs of the Univerſe; and when the unchriſtian Bill, called An Act to prevent Schiſm, was before the Houſe of Commons, I wrote this following Diſcourſe, which I now publiſh at the Requeſt of Friends of all Parties; and the rather, that the World may judge of it, becauſe it came then, without my Knowledge, into the Hands of ſome High-Church-Men, who reviled it worſe than they would have a lewd immoral Diſcourſe. The Introduction is, in a Manner, foreign to it; but I take the Liberty to inſert ſome Things in it, which I thought needful to have been placed in my former Papers, never intending, unleſs mightily provoked, to appear more in Print on theſe Subjects; though, if it pleaſe God to continue to me that Share of Health I now enjoy, I intend not to turn indolent, and negligent; but I will endeavour to divert ſome, and inform others, both with Hiſtory and Laws that may be uſeful to the Publick.

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I aim at nothing but the Peace and Prosperity of my Country; and if I shall do any Thing towards that great and desirable End, I shall esteem my self rich, great, and happy: but if I fail of being Master of those great Wishes, I shall yet have some Comfort and Pleasure in the Thoughts of the Attempts I have made to accomplish those glorious Purposes; and shall hope, That though my Labours are now unsuccessful, they may one Time or another meet with a better Fate. Farewell.

P.S. *I shall esteem no impudent groundless Reflections of angry malicious Men, who daily blaspheme God and the King, whose Follies and evil Consciences make them ashamed to own who they are, to be any Provocation: I pray God to convert and forgive them; as to what concerns me, I heartily do. I shall endeavour to live so, and to behave my self so in the Station God has placed me, that if Men speak Truth of me, they shall speak very little ill of me: And if they tell Lies of me, I shall hope that my Life and Conversation will contradict and expose them. What have I done to exasperate them, more than they do, or ought to do every* Sunday, viz. *Tell Men of their Faults, and convince them of their Errors, in Order to mend them? But they tell me, That is their Business, and this is not mine: Surely we are Travellers hastening to our Journey's End; and if I should see my Fellow-Traveller lose himself, go out of his Way, and walk upon dangerous Precipices, or Quicksands, should he be angry at my Directions, should not I be to blame, if I should not give him Cautions, and put him into the right Road? But they say, I call them Names: I mention no particular Man; and when I reflect upon scandalous Practices, and a Man's Conscience accuses him, that he is the Man I mean; his Conscience, not I, calls him the bad Names. I believe any honest Man will say, that those that solemnly take Oaths, with no Intention to observe them (and many such there are, as appears by their unseemly Behaviour at their taking them, and*

their

their acting contrary to them afterward) are the vileſt Wretches, and the worſt part of the Creation: They blaſpheme God in the higheſt Manner, they ridicule all Religion; and, as far as in them lies, diſſolve and annihilate all Obligations that are, or can be made between Man and Man. Such Practices may probably occaſion Blood-ſhed and Confuſion in the World; for in ſome Caſes, if you can find no tie to oblige Men, you will be forced to deſtroy them out of Self-preſervation, becauſe you can invent no other Way to ſecure your ſelves. And every thinking Man will own, that if ever they ſhould fill the Throne with a Popiſh Prince, both they, as well as we are undone: Theſe Men ought ſurely to be made ſenſible of their Errors: And ſince our All is at Stake, a Man may fairly expoſtulate with them. They ſay, they are angry at my reducing them from being Ambaſſadors, to be no more but idle, ſimple Creatures: But why am I to be blamed? I had theſe Notions from Dr. Bently, *who in his Charge ſays, the Notion of the Miſſion was a fooliſh Trifle; and I never heard him queſtioned for it, and upon Examination I found it to be true. If any Man would rob me, may not I defend my ſelf? If any Man would invade, and take away my Eſtate by falſe Evidence, may not I expoſe their lewd Practices, without breach of Charity? If theſe Men pretend to ſave or damn me at their Pleaſure, I need not ask my Doom; and they invade my Right in the moſt valuable Thing, and I muſt expoſtulate with them, and detect the Cheat. I will conclude with an Obſervation of an honeſt* Hermite *to the* Monks, *that came to him to know, if they ſhould attend the bloody* Auſtin, *who came from the Pope on pretence to ſettle this Country in a better Knowledge of Religion, and on that Account had ſummoned them to attend him; they further deſired to be informed of him, how they ſhould know, if he was from God; the* Hermite *bid them attend him, and that if he roſe up to them, and received them humbly, they ſhould conclude him to be a good Man, and obſerve him; if not, ſlight him: For,*

ſays he, a Man that is truly Religious will be humble, and neglect no part of the Duty of a Chriſtian. I will leave the Reader to make the Application.

Obſerve how far unintelligible hard Words captivate Mens Underſtandings. I find the Writings of a late famed Author, whoſe Labours were too valuable to be confined in the narrow Compaſs of one Kingdom, are handed about here, and much valued and eſteemed: He had rather have Men Orthodox than Sincere; the latter he explodes, the other he makes the very Corner-Stone of our Religion; and to put it in plain Engliſh, it will be this: It is better for Religion that Men be Knaves (for what are they better, that act not according to their beſt and trueſt Judgment?) than to be honeſt, that is ſincere, and not comply with the Dictates of the Orthodox, which are the Prieſts of that Side, that have the Power in their Hands. Surely this, when put into Engliſh, don't ſound right, and can hardly be the Chriſtian Religion.

The Pretenſions of the Schiſm Bill were to prevent Hypocriſy; the Deſign of it, as they afterwards owned, was to garble Corporations. Thus you ſee ſome Men make Religion no more than a ſtalking Horſe to ſerve their own Purpoſes; and here it was evident, that Hypocrites brought in a Bill to prevent Hypocriſy: It is very conſpicuous, that when Sincerity deſtroys the ſtately Fabrick the Orthodox have in their own Imaginations erected, Sincerity is a Crime, though on ſome occaſions they ſeem very angry at Hypocriſy: I wiſh they would in plain Engliſh tell us, what they would have; but whither am I going?

Farewell.

Sir,

Sir *R------d C---ks*

HIS

Farewel SERMON, &c.

In LUKE ix. 55, 56.

You may find theſe Words,

But he turned, and rebuked them, and ſaid, Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of: For the Son of Man is not come to deſtroy Mens Lives, but to ſave them.

IN the foregoing Verſes you may read, that our bleſſed Saviour ſent to a Village in *Samaria*, to prepare a convenient Entertainment for him and his Diſciples, but they would not receive him; and his Diſciples *James* and *John*, when they ſaw it, ſaid, *Lord, wilt thou that we command*

down Fire from Heaven to conſume them, even as Elias did? You may obſerve farther, that *Peter, James* and *John* had ſeen *Moſes* and *Elias* in Glory, talking with Jeſus in the Mountain: Theſe very Diſciples therefore, that had ſeen *Moſes* and *Elias*, the greateſt Prophets, leave the Manſions of the Bleſſed to attend on Jeſus, and had ſeen his Works, heard his Doctrine, and knew very well that Jeſus was God, the Son of God: Theſe could not imagine any Torture bad enough, any Puniſhment too ſevere, or any Execution too ſudden or exemplary for thoſe Miſcreants, that ſo ungratefully refuſed, and unmannerly rejected ſo great a Favour, the greateſt Honour in the World, *viz.* to entertain the Lord of Lords, the Maker of all Men and Things, who had alſo invited himſelf to be their Gueſt; which aggravates the Circumſtances of their ſcandalous Refuſal. It may be, their being ſo lately with *Elias*, made this ſort of Puniſhment ſo eaſily enter into their Thoughts; and they could not but readily conclude, that if ſuch Puniſhment was due, and inflicted on thoſe that affronted the Servant, how much more ought they to be chaſtized, that had ſo contumeliouſly abuſed and rejected the Lord and Maſter? They therefore, *James* and *John*, that had been with him in the Mountain, and had juſt before ſeen his Glory, when they ſaw the immediate Affront, ſaid to him, *Wilt thou that we command down Fire from Heaven to conſume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and ſaid, Ye know not what Spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to deſtroy Mens Lives, but to ſave them.* There is not in the Life of the bleſſed Jeſus any thing that ſhews more Earneſtneſs or Diſpleaſure, *viz. He turned and rebuked them:* We may therefore well conclude, that there was no greater occaſion offered him. You may obſerve in *verſe* 44. of the ſame *Chapter*; Jeſus told them that he ſhould be delivered into the Hands of Men;

and

and in the 46th *verse*, there aroſe a Diſpute amongſt them, which ſhould be the greateſt: In the 48th *verse*, they forbad one that caſt out Devils in Chriſt's Name, becauſe he did not follow them: This argued abundance of Pride, and demonſtrated the great Ambition that reigned in the Diſciples. And our Saviour, who knew all Things, knew that the *Samaritans* would not receive him: Therefore it is not unlikely, that he ſent on purpoſe to teach them by his Example, Patience and Humility; and to let them know and learn his Doctrines, and what they ſhould teach, and how they ſhould inſtruct Mankind, after he was delivered into the Hands of Men. But I cannot but imagine, that the Men of our Days are rather the Diſciples of the Diſciples before they were regenerated, and inſpired, than the Diſciples of the bleſſed Jeſus, the Author and Inſtitutor of our Faith; and I queſtion not, but one might name thoſe amongſt us, that would almoſt juſtify *James* and *John*; and would ſay, What Reaſon was there for our Saviour's Reſentment? Did the Diſciples do any more than ſhew a becoming Zeal for the Honour of that Lord and Maſter they ſerved and knew? If Examples are not to be made of thoſe that diſhonour Chriſt, that ſpeak Evil of his Religion, that deny his Divinity, and that will not ſo much as receive him into their Village; if theſe Practices are endured, Religion it ſelf will fail and decay, and Impiety will get the Aſcendant, and domineer. I may ſay, that from theſe fleſhly Arguments, from theſe Conſiderations of the Diſciples before they had learned Chriſt, have come into the World all thoſe Abominations, uncharitable Opinions, and worſe Practices; from hence have proceeded the *Popiſh* Inquiſitions and Maſſacres, their Plots and Aſſaſſinations: From hence amongſt us of the Reformed Religion have proceeded burning of Hereticks,

Perſe-

Perſecutions, Creeds, Teſts, and Occaſional Conformity Bills, Penalties, and Puniſhments. From hence have proceeded thoſe falſe Arguings; If a Man ſhall blaſpheme the King, and endeavour to dethrone him, or leſſen his Authority, or ſpeak ſlightly of his Title, what Severities and Tortures ſhall he ſuffer! But to revile againſt God, to deny the Divinity of our Saviour, or diſown his Religion, they are ſmall Matters, and of no Conſideration with you: And doth not this plainly ſhew that you have more Regard to the Honour of Men, more Reverence for earthly Potentates, than you have for God and his Chriſt? To this I reply, *You know not what Spirit you are of:* Man's Heart is full of Pride, he is exalted with the Thoughts of Power, is ſubject to Fears; his Head is giddy with Vanities and high Conceits; he reſents Injuries and Affronts; is liable to Injuries and Violence; he dreads nothing more than the Falling from his high Station and Dignity. Nothing therefore can expiate or atone for Crimes of that Nature; the Puniſhment, nay, it may be, the Life of the Offender cannot ſatisfy, but his innocent Poſterity muſt alſo feel the Effects of his Father's Tranſgreſſion: And fooliſh Man hath ſaid in his Heart, that God is ſuch an one as himſelf: Thou Fool, Can Man dethrone God, can he plot againſt God's Empire?

There is no Delinquent againſt Heaven, but is, at the ſame Time, his own Accuſer, Judge, and Executioner: And when Men puniſh for Heaven's Sake, their Zeal and Tranſport has ſome private Views or Intereſt that makes it flame. Chriſt tells us, That the Deſign of his Coming was to ſave, not to deſtroy Men. There is nothing more convinceth me of the Truth and Excellency of the Chriſtian Religion, there is nothing more demonſtrates its Verity, than that it was not introduced by

Power

Power and Force, nor eſtabliſhed by Violence, the worſt Enemies to Reaſon, and therefore no good Friends to Religion.

Now to illuſtrate what I have ſaid, I beg you to examine and conſider, and then tell me, Can the moſt ſanguine Zealot affirm, that the Converts made by the *French* Dragoons, or the Terror of the Wheel, will bring Honour to God, or Salvation to their poor Souls? Can Hypocriſy be acceptable to God? Or can a ſervile Lip-Worſhip bring Salvation to the Soul of Man? And can any of our Zealots ſay, that if it was in their Power, they would not call for Fire from Heaven to conſume the Men they are, in their own Judgments, ſo juſtly diſpleaſed with, for their different Sentiments in Religious Matters? And may not I then, in our Saviour's Words, ſay to them, *Ye know not what Spirit ye are of?*

It is certain, that Man ought to ſerve God in a Manner worthy of him, not according to the fond Conceptions, and the Imaginations of his own poor Underſtanding; eſpecially when God hath laid down Rules for him, and preſcribed him poſitive Directions. God knoweth Man, and what is in Man: But Man knoweth God no further, than it hath pleaſed God to reveal himſelf to Man. It is true, theſe Men may ſay, and we may believe them, that if they had been conſulted in the firſt Inſtitution of the Chriſtian Religion, they would have made theſe the firſt Principles of it; the firſt Law ſhould have been to deſtroy and execute all thoſe audacious Opponents, who durſt have contemned or denied that gracious Son of God, who died, and offered himſelf up an Oblation upon the Croſs for the Sins of the World. But our Saviour tells us, that he came to ſave Men's Lives, and not

to deſtroy them: And doth not theſe Men's Pride make them believe that they are wiſer than God? There is nothing in the Scripture more explain'd to us, than the Love of God to Men: There is nothing more often commanded to us, than to love one another: There is nothing pronounced in the New Teſtament more terrible, than to die in our Sins; for in the Grave there is no Repentance, and therefore no Hopes of Pardon. And can that Man be thought to be a Chriſtian, who will deliberately break the chief Law of the Goſpel, which is the Law of Love and Amity; and inſtead of that, will murder his Brother who has no Way offended him, and that in cold Blood? For Murder it is, and the worſt Sort of Murder, aggravated with the moſt provoking Circumſtances, *viz.* Killing a Man by Colour of Law, contrary to Law: And it is without doubt contrary to Chriſt's Law, to puniſh thoſe with Death, whom we call Hereticks.

But this has been too often practiſed ſince the Reformation, to the great Scandal of the Proteſtant Profeſſion. This is not only Murder, but the moſt barbarous and unheard of Cruelty, as well as the higheſt Breach of Chriſt's Law; for it not only kills the Body, but alſo forces the poor miſtaken Wretch to die in his Sins; and, as far as we are able, damns his Soul; whereas had he lived longer he might have repented, and become Orthodox. Surely ſuch Opinion, and ſuch Practices, are the worſt of Hereſies.

Robert Groſted, a learned and good Biſhop of *Lincoln*, thus defines Hereſy; *Hæreſis eſt ſententia humano ſenſu electa, Scripturis ſacris contraria, palam docta, pertinaciter defenſa.* By which Definition we ſee the greater Heretick burns the leſſer.

And

And I muſt obſerve another great Abſurdity in theſe Men's Arguings, *viz.* In comparing God's excellent, divine, omnipotent Perfections, and his Love to Mankind, to the Malice, Fears, Heats and Paſſions of Men. Man, ſay they, takes him to be his Friend, that will revenge himſelf on thoſe who traduce him behind his Back, and ſet light by him! And therefore they conclude, That God, who is both Omnipreſent and Omnipotent, is pleaſed to have thoſe who offend and ſlight his Divinity puniſhed by Men.

God's Hand is not ſhortned; he can, without Man's weak Aſſiſtance, reach and chaſtiſe the proudeſt and greateſt Offenders, both in this and the next World. The ſureſt Way of honouring God is to do his Will; and his Will can be known by no better Way than his Revelation; and particularly, for what Purpoſe he came into the World, that muſt of Neceſſity be a very eſſential Part of his Will; and he tells us very plainly, that the End of his Coming was to ſave, not to deſtroy Men's Lives.

When you ask any of our ſanguine Zealots, if they would perſecute Men, to force them to believe the Goſpel, they faintly ſay, No; but will own that they would be glad that they had no Toleration: The Concluſion is pretty plain, they would not conſent that they ſhould ſerve God according to the beſt of their Knowledge and Underſtanding; and yet they would not have this termed Force or Violence. But, I hope, that they never will have Occaſion to complain of ſuch ill Uſage, of ſuch Perſecution, which I think to be the greateſt Evil that can be inflicted. As for my Part, I had rather be deprived of my Eſtate, of my Liberty,

than of that Liberty of Serving my God in the Manner I think most worthy of him, in that Way I believe to be most acceptable to him. It is a Maxim worthy of the Institutor of our Religion, to do to others, as we would be done unto. To this they answer, Would the Judge be willing that the Malefactor should condemn him to be hanged? Why, then the Judge should not condemn the Malefactor. Why truly, this is the very Case; this is the Misfortune: Men in Power are the Judges, and all that will not believe as they would have them, are Malefactors. But surely, no such just Conclusion can be drawn, Christians ought to love one the other, and to convince one another by Reason and Scripture, not by Force, but to do to others as they would be done unto; and therefore, say they, a Judge ought not to condemn a Malefactor.

It is the Judge's Office, it is his Duty to God and Man to condemn Malefactors; but it is not the Office of a Christian Magistrate, it is against Christ's Laws to punish honest peaceable Men for no other Crime, than because they cannot fathom so deep, nor exactly conceive and believe, as the Magistrate would have them.

Whoever believes a God, must believe that that God cannot lie: And therefore he must believe those Things, that he is convinced God has revealed; and must believe it to be his Duty, to observe every Thing that God has commanded; and only these are Objects of Faith; and whatever contradicts such well grounded Opinions, is not capable of being instilled into Mankind, but by superior Arguments and Reason, which make other Impressions, which confute and really alter his former Thoughts and Opinions. And to punish a Man, because he cannot believe as you

would

would have him, is inhuman, barbarous and moſt tyrannical.

It is unchriſtian to make a Man tell you a Lie, and moſt irreligious to make him lie to God; which is certainly done, when by Terrors you oblige him to expreſs that to God with his Lips, which he in his Heart believes to be falſe; this muſt be offenſive to the God of Truth: And we do not find any Example made with greater Severity, than that on *Ananias* and *Sapphira* for lying to God; but what is it more or leſs than lying to God, when I profeſs that with my Tongue to him, which my Judgment cannot comply with, and my Heart abhorreth?

May the great wiſe God in his Mercy pardon thoſe poor ſpirited Wretches, who have not Courage enough to reſiſt the Terrors of thoſe ſpiritual Tyrants: And may the Curſes and Puniſhments, rather light upon the Heads of thoſe that force them to Sin againſt their Knowledge; that would (according to the modern Way of expreſſing) rather oblige them to be Orthodox, than Sincere.

It is the Glory of a Man, to ſpeak and to own what he believes to be true; that is to be ſincere. It is in ſome Senſe, happy to be Orthodox; that is, to be really of the ſame Opinion his Governors are of. I believe, there have not been many in the World of that obſtinate Temper, as really to believe a Thing; and at the ſame Time not to own they did believe, till that Confeſſion was extorted from them: And I dare affirm, that few have been really convinced by thoſe Argumenrs.

Suppoſe an armed Body of *Chriſtians* ſhould ſurprize a Party of *Barbarians*, and when they had maſter'd them, ſhould tell them, that there was Water to baptize them, or Halters to hang them, if they refuſed: I preſume no one would approve of this ſhort Way of making Converts, or that thoſe ſo converted were good Chriſtians. Now as harſh as this ſounds, we may obſerve worſe Practices every Day. As for thoſe Barbarians, they never heard of thoſe Things before; the Way of converting may ſeem hard to them, the Things that are offered to them may be true or falſe, for all that they know to the contrary. But it is more ſevere abundantly to force Chriſtians to alter their Opinions, to abjure their Opinions, and to make Confeſſions contrary to their Judgments: For they were before informed of theſe Things, and are forced to own that to be true, which they are convinced, upon mature Thought and Conſideration, is falſe; and are forced to forſake what they really believed to be true. And when the Governors change their Opinion, the ſame Argument will oblige them to change their Opinions, if they intend to be Orthodox. For call it what you will, perſecuting Men for Religion is (as I ſaid before) only puniſhing them for not believing as the Church believes, which is the governing Power in plain *Engliſh*.

Now let us conſider the Way, the Rule that Men generally take to examine the Sentiments of others by.

Men are generally ſo well conceited of their own Abilities, that they are very apt to believe, that every Thing they do or think, is beſt and uncontroulable; And that all thoſe that differ from them are cer-

certainly in the wrong, and therefore ought to be punished.

From hence observe the ill Consequences that must follow, when Men deviate from Christ's Laws, and are led by their own Passions and Pleasures, which they cover under the Name of Zeal for the Church, then those that are uppermost will persecute their dissenting Subjects: And when their odious Government makes them lose their Sovereignty, the Ill-used, when they have the Authority, will retaliate and revenge the Wrongs they had endured. So that there will be a perpetual State of War established, as it were by a Law of their own making amongst Christians, the chief Law and Principles of whose Religion, is to love as Brethren; and in order to prevent those Wranglings, evil Surmises and Contentions, we are directly commanded by God not so much as to censure or judge one the other; but to pull out the Beams out of our own Eyes, before we pry into, and observe the Moths in the Eyes of our Brother.

I cannot find by the Gospel Rules, that we ought by any indirect Means, by Rewards, Fears or Punishments, to byas the *Heathens* that know not God, or to convert the *Jews* that deny Christ. Punishments, depriving Men of Places, or giving them Rewards or Places, are no where proposed to us as good Methods to convert Men to turn Christians, or to alter their Opinions.

From this and other Considerations agreeing with the Scripture Rules, I lay down this as a Maxim of our Religion, That Christianity ought not to be propagated by Force or Rewards, but only by Reason and Arguments deduced from Scripture: And that we ought not to propagate our Religion

gion by Ways, Arts, or Methods, not warranted by Scripture, or the Example of the Bleſſed Inſtitutor of our Faith, or his holy Apoſtles, after they were holy by Inſpiration, and fully inſtructed.

I am not a Chriſtian becauſe I was born and bred in the Faith, but becauſe I am convinced of the Reaſonableneſs and Truth of it: And it is not the leaſt Argument to recommend it to me before all other Religions, that it was not introduced by the Powers of this World, or ſupported by Authority, by the Dreads, Terrors, or Favours of the Magiſtrate. If our Saviour, who was God All-Wiſe and Powerful, had been pleaſed to have propagated and eſtabliſhed his Religion by thoſe Means, he could have been born under a Canopy of State, have been educated in the moſt noble Palaces, and have ſent Kings and Princes for his Apoſtles, to have maintained his Doctrines, and ſupported his Religion. If this Religion was true then, it is the ſame now; and if Rewards and Mulcts were not allowed of, nor any Way countenanced or encouraged then, as fitting Arguments to make Converts, they ought not to be made Uſe of now.

Vain Man! Is the Wiſdom of the Almighty leſs, or is his Hand ſhortned, or art thou wiſer than God, or has he more need now of thy feeble Hand to ſupport his Deity? Reflect into and examine thy ſelf; and thou wilt find thy Deſire to convince thy Neighbour by Arms, Fraud, or Force, to proceed not from God, nor a true Chriſtian Zeal, but from thy own Pride, Malice, and Envy; from the Opinion thou haſt of thy own Excellency, Wiſdom, and Judgment; and thy Inclination to make Converts at an eaſier Rate, than at the Trouble of living well, preaching ſound Doctrine, and giving a good Example. What aſſures thee that thou art

in the right, and thy Neighbour in the wrong, but the Opinion thou haſt of thy own Abilities, and of his Weakneſs? In which Points it is very likely that he is no way behind-hand with thee; and that, had he Power, he would uſe thee as thou doſt him.

It is ſo much the Intereſt of every one to take Care of his own Soul, and eternal Welfare, that in Charity I can't think any Men will trifle about Things of that high Nature, I mean thoſe that will think about it: And for all Men's Confidence, and high Thoughts of themſelves, I will venture to pronounce them to be in the wrong, when by Fears or *Præmiums* they endeavour to make others as good Chriſtians, and as Orthodox as themſelves.

All Nations believe a God; all Countries have Laws againſt Adultery, Theft, Murder, Drunkenneſs, and Things of ſuch a deteſtable Nature: And ſuch Perſons who like the Papiſts hold Principles ruinous to Mankind, as well as pernicious to the Peace of the Country they live in, may and ought to be handled as Malefactors. But, I ſay, as we are Chriſtians, it is not commanded us, it is not permitted us, it is not lawful for us, to make Converts by Terrors and Dread: It is not recommended to us in the New Teſtament, nor any where in Scripture allowed Chriſtians, to put even the Blaſphemer to Death.

All the Power that was ever given or made Uſe of by the Primitive Chriſtians, according to the Rules and Examples of the Apoſtles, was to turn them out of the Church: And if Men's Zeal ſhould carry them to greater Heights, it would be as convenient, and as abſolutely neceſſary for the Chriſtian World, to hold a General Synod, or Council,

to declare what was Blaſphemy, and what was Hereſy, and who ſhould be the Judges, as it was for us in *Edward* III's Reign, to declare what was Treaſon; otherwiſe one may eaſily foreſee the Conſequences. Thoſe that were uppermoſt would declare all thoſe they feared might at any Time rival their Power, Hereticks and Blaſphemers; and they, if ever their Turn came to be uppermoſt, would retaliate. By which Means our moſt excellent Religion, which came from God, would be made a diabolical Stratagem to make Men perpetually deſtroy one another, out of Pretence of Regard to, and in Honour of that God that came to ſave, and not to deſtroy Mankind.

In the eighth Chapter of St. *Mark*, our Saviour tells his Diſciples, that this Spirit doth proceed from the Leaven of *Herod*, and from the Leaven of the Phariſees: And in *Ver.* 34. of that *Chapter*, our Saviour preſcribes a Remedy againſt that Leaven; *Whoever will come after me, let him deny himſelf*, &c. Now do but conſider the vaſt Difference that is between Papiſt and Proteſtant, as to their Principles; and yet there are Proteſtants that make them their Boſom Friends, that careſs them; whereas it has been ſaid, and can hardly be unſaid, The Papiſts are Idolaters. On the contrary, conſider the ſmall Difference that is between us, and ſome diſſenting Proteſtants; and yet they are our mortal Enemies, and as ſuch we would ſerve them, were our Power as extenſive as our Inclinations are good towards them. What can this proceed from? Surely from the Seeds of ſome of the old Leaven. We fancy that the Idolater will no more contend with us for Superiority; and that they like us better than they do the other Proteſtants, and that therefore, if there ſhould be Occaſion for Help, that they would aſſiſt us to maintain our Superiority

over the other Proteſtants; for they are rich, they have good Friends, they multiply, and we look upon them with a jealous Eye.

It is true, an evil Eye multiplies all the Proſperity of thoſe it bears Ill-Will to: They have been in the Saddle, and what has been may be ſo again; therefore if they are not humbled, they will ruin the Church, and pretend to an equal Power with us, if not an Authority over us. Let us ſuppoſe it to be poſſible for us to do as the Diſciples did to the Bleſſed Jeſus: Let us ſuppoſe him to be upon Earth, and that it were poſſible for us immediately to make our Applications to him, and that we ſhould ſay, Lord, we have found honeſt, well-meaning, good Men, preaching in thy Name, they have preſſed Men to obey thy Laws, to forſake their wicked Ways, and to do thy Will; but becauſe they would not own us to be their Superiors, and becauſe they would not truckle under and follow us, we forbad them, as thy Diſciples formerly did thoſe that caſt out Devils in thy Name. Some of them we have martyred, others we have impriſoned, and others we have perſecuted. Can we imagine that our Saviour would commend us for thoſe unchriſtian Practices? Or that he would ſay to us, If you would read and digeſt the Scriptures, you muſt know that this was not my Will; the Deſign of my Coming was Love to Mankind: I came to ſave, not to deſtroy Men: Theſe Imperfections of my Diſciples were delivered down to you by my Prophets and Evangeliſts, to teach you to avoid the Errors and Miſtakes my Diſciples ran into before they were regenerated by my Spirit. Would not our Lord tell us, *Rebuke them not*, perſecute them not, forbid them not? You ſee Miracles are ceaſed, the Men of this untoward Generation cannot caſt out Devils,

or heal the Sick: All they can do is to be holy, and to perſuade others by their good Lives and Converſation, and righteous Preaching to become new Creatures: And they that do ſincerely ſo, cannot likely ſpeak Evil of me: *Ye know not what Spirit ye are of.*

But I know theſe Zealots will not yet be ſatisfied, but will be at their old Queſtions again, and will ſay, May every one that will, preach and teach Hereſies and Blaſphemies? I therefore muſt in Anſwer repeat what I ſaid before; I cannot tell what you will call Hereſy or Blaſphemy; but I ſee no Liberty in the Scripture given for one Chriſtian to judge another, much leſs to puniſh another for differing in Opinions only. Give me Leave, from one Example, to ſhew you the Conſequence of ſuch Doctrines, if allow'd of; I mean, the Abettors of the Doctrines of Free-Will and Predeſtination, in King *James* the Firſt's Time. Both Sides were ſo confident of their Aſſertions, ſo zealous to maintain their Opinions; they were each ſo reſolute, and aſſured that they were in the right, that no one can queſtion but that if their Powers had been equal to their Wills, they would have ruined and extirpated each other: And that very Religion that commands and teaches Men to love and to bear with one another, would, no doubt of it, by Wreſting of Scripture, have ſupplyed them with Arguments and Materials to have condemned, and to have burned each other for Hereticks. From what I have now ſaid, relating to a Controverſy of no Uſe or Advantage to the Chriſtian World, I draw this Concluſion, that, Thoſe that know and have learned Chriſt, and will ſerve him in a Manner worthy of him, muſt ſerve him in the Way he has commanded and preſcribed; they muſt not be high-

minded,

minded, revengeful, or ſo conceited, as to believe themſelves to be infallible, and to conclude that all that differ from them, though in the moſt minute Matters, muſt be Reprobates, ſtigmatized, ſilenſed, cenſured, and ill-uſed for their Opinions: They muſt not call for Fire from Heaven, nor kindle one on Earth, to conſume them: No, though they know they affront God, and will not admit him into their Hearts; no, though they will not ſo much as permit him to come into their Village. Men are but Men; and if one Side perſecutes, the other will hate; and when Opportunity ſerves be very apt to revenge. We daily ſee Men turn from Papiſt to Proteſtant, and from Proteſtant to Papiſt; and if Perſecution was allowed of, what Havock muſt it make in the World? The Papiſt, when a Papiſt, perſecutes the Proteſtants; the ſame Man when a Proteſtant perſecutes the Papiſts.

Thus we ſee, If we intend to preſerve Peace in Chriſt's Church, there is a Neceſſity of parting with Force and Violence in religious Matters, from the Reaſon, from the Conveniency thereof, though we had no Law from Heaven to oblige us to it. Were it permitted us to deſtroy Men for their Opinions, theſe further Inconveniencies muſt follow: The mean ſpirited to avoid Puniſhments, would turn Hypocrites; Chriſtians would ceaſe to be Chriſtians: They may, indeed, like the Papiſts, call themſelves Chriſtians; but they muſt loſe the eſſential Parts that make them ſo, *viz.* Tenderneſs, Love, and Compaſſion one towards another; and they muſt become Murderers, Perſecutors, and Manſlayers. The only Argument to decide the Right, would be to know who had moſt Power: For he that had Power to oppreſs, muſt be in the right, and the oppreſſed could not help being in the

wrong. But these were not the Marks of being in the right or the wrong, amongst the Primitive Christians.

Thou opinionative Man! What makes thee so confident that thou art in the right, and hast this great Assurance to compel others to believe as thy self dost? It proceeds from Reasons that have convinced thee of the Truth; and why shouldst thou deprive another of that Liberty?

I cannot upon this Occasion forbear commending the prudent Conduct, and good Nature of the Papists. Since they will not give Men Leave to judge for themselves, it is really good Nature, and prudent Conduct to restrain them from reading the Bible; for if they do read, they must not judge for themselves, what the Intent and Meaning of what they read is. Certainly, in this Point they are to be commended; they are more in the right than the Protestants are, or can pretend to be. For those deny their People the Use of the Bible; and they have no other Knowledge but what is learned from, or has been instilled into them by the Priest. In this Case if they deviate from what they are taught, and know nothing else to direct them, there is a good Shew of Reason, a good Colour to punish them as refractory and untractable. But for us Protestants, to direct our People from their Infancy to read their Bible, and to tell them, that there they may find the Way to eternal Life and Happiness: And after all that, if upon their best Inquiry, they shall find any Text there, any Thing that shall make other Impressions in them, than what you would have them believe; I may venture to affirm it, That in such Case, if you punish, discountenance, or use them hardly, you are guilty

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of as great Abſurdities as any you charge the Papiſts with. Either deny them the Uſe of the Bible, or give them Leave to judge for themſelves; or declare to them that they may read only for an Amuſement, that they muſt not regard what they read, for the Magiſtrate is infallible; and only laugh at the Infallibility of the Pope on no other Reaſon, than becauſe he aſſumes that to himſelf alone, which every Proteſtant Ruler pretends to as well as himſelf.

There is ſome Colour, ſome Pretence for one that takes himſelf to be infallible, to give Laws, and govern the Conſciences of others; and there is good Reaſon for Men to be govern'd by thoſe they believe to be infallible: But it is very abſurd for a Man that pretends to no ſuch Thing, but owns himſelf to be a weak and fallible Mortal, to pretend to domineer over other Men's Conſciences, whom he muſt own to be as wiſe, and as infallible as himſelf.

There is no great Reaſon to believe, That Men will be guided by their Fancies, more than their Judgment, in their Interpretation; for all is at Stake, often their Peace in this World, certainly their Salvation in the next. Which is Argument ſufficient to convince any Man, that their Faith, and Opinions are grounded upon the beſt Conſiderations and Thoughts they have, or can be Maſters of: And if they are really perſuaded and convinced of the Truth of what they profeſs, they ought to adhere to, and abide by what they do ſo believe. And would it become a juſt and wiſe Magiſtrate (if he had not the golden Rule to act by) to puniſh a Man for no other Reaſon, than becauſe he was honeſt, and ſincerely religious?

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The Bible, and the free Uſe thereof, is the Comfort of a true Chriſtian, the Glory and the Pleaſure of a Proteſtant: And if we muſt believe as our Church or Rulers would have us, or be burned for Hereticks, or be impriſoned as Enemies, or made incapable of Places, or any Truſt in the Government, to which otherwiſe we have as good and juſt Pretenſions, as any other natural born Subjects; then is our Glory turned into Shame, and our Comfort into Sorrow and Diſtreſs.

Deprive us therefore of the great Bleſſing of Reading and Meditating upon the Laws of our God; or take away from us the Dangers that attend us, the Penalties that we, our Friends, and Families are liable to, the incapacitating Laws that render us unſerviceable, and uſeleſs to our Country: Out of a Chriſtian Charity do the one, or out of an Antichriſtian Policy do the other.

Will it benefit a Soul? Will it convince a Man's Underſtanding, to be forced by Fear, or perſuaded by Advantage, to own a Principle he cannot inwardly approve of, but complies with only out of Hopes or Fears? And if it will be no Advantage to you to make Men Diſſemblers, it will be certainly no Honour or Pleaſure to the Almighty, to be prayed to and adored by feigned Lips, when the Heart is far from him: Nor can it be any true Satisfaction to you, to act your ſelf contrary to God's revealed Will.

If then, I have fairly ſtated the Caſe, it muſt appear, that every one ought to read the Bible, that can read; and that he ought to ſearch and find out the beſt Way he can learn of ſerving God,

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in a Manner worthy of him: And if there is nothing in his Tenets or Principles prejudicial to the Publick, nothing dangerous or ſinful, he ought to be permitted to ſerve God in his own Way.

But you will Anſwer, for all you have ſaid, I am not ſatisfied, that a Man may blaſpheme and deny God, and may publiſh Books to ſuch Purpoſes; as *Aſgyl*, *Toland*, and the Author of the *Rights of the Chriſtian Church* have done; and that they ſhould go unpuniſhed.

If they have wrote falſly, artificially, or fooliſhly, expoſe them, detect them, and anſwer them: But as for burning their Books, if I ſhould talk politickly on this Occaſion, I muſt ſay, you would do them too much Honour; and rather give them a Reputation, than a Diſparagement to their Labours. Things that are contemned are ſoon forgot; but what has the Government's Mark of Infamy ſet upon it, tho' in it ſelf inconſiderable, do's thereby become valuable and eſteemed. Would you have the Authors puniſhed? That would look as if you were angry, becauſe you could not anſwer what they had wrote. As for my Part, I wiſh that all thoſe Authors, that diſturb the Peace of the Chriſtian World by their new Notions, Quirks and Subtilties, would learn the Ways of Peace and true Religion, and that they would leave off being Tools to Faction, and Friends to Parties; and that the chief Aim of Men were to teach others to live better, and to love one another; which Bleſſings are ſeldom obtained by Controverſy.

I would therefore propoſe, in order to prevent thoſe ill Conſequences and unchriſtian Practices, that

that all Men that are called Christians should repeal all Penalties, disqualifying and sanguinary Laws, unbecoming Arguments to be used by rational Creatures, to others that are their Equals in every Degree; as Mr. *Chillingworth* saith, *Page* 126.

Take away this Persecuting, Burning, Cursing and Damning of Men, for not subscribing to the Words of Men, as to the Words of God; require of Christians only to believe Christ, and to call no Man Master, but him only; let those leave off claiming Infallibility, that have no Title to it; and let them, that in their Words disclaim it, disclaim it also in their Actions: In a Word, Take away Tyranny, which is the Devil's Instrument to support Error and Superstition, and other Impieties, in the several Parts of the World, which could not otherwise withstand the Power of Truth; I say, take away Tyranny, and restore to Christians their full and just Liberty of captivating their Understandings to Scripture only; and as Rivers, when they have a free Passage, run all to the Ocean; so it may be well hoped, that universal Liberty thus moderated, may quickly reduce Christendom to Peace and Amity. I must say this for the Church of *England*, that tho' she has burned some good Men in their outward Behaviour for *Heretick*s, and has been seduced by her Princes to be a Tool to *Popery*, and by that means to abuse her Brethren *Protestants*; yet the soundest Part of her are the freest from Persecution; and therefore contribute their uttermost, to make her the purest, and most Christian Church in the World.

But further, as to the Men you would have branded, and as to the Books you would have

burnt;

burnt; I know not what you mean. If our Religion is of God, it will ſtand in Defiance of all the Arts and Contrivances of the Devil and wicked Men, his Agents. What, are you ſo little acquainted with your Religion as to doubt, whether it came from God? Are you afraid to have the Articles of your Faith inquired into, and the Principles of your Religion examined? Be ſatisfied, the Chriſtian Religion will endure any Tryal, the Gates of Hell cannot prevail againſt it: Your unwarranted and indirect Practices to ſupport it, do it more Prejudice and Damage, than all the Aſſaults and Attacks of its worſt Enemies; fear nothing, our Enemies cannot hurt us: We will follow Chriſt, and not be furious againſt thoſe that will not follow us. Our Enemies will do us Service, if we make the right Uſe of them: They will put us in a State of Holy Warfare: They will arm us with Weapons becoming Chriſtians; they will force us to watch, to live holily, to put off our Security, to exerciſe Charity and Patience, and to have our Truſt, and ſure Refuge in him only, that is Almighty.

Let who will read the Scriptures; the excellent Doctrines of the Chriſtian Religion will demonſtrate the Inſtitutor of it to be God: Truth is the more conſpicuous, the more it is inquired into and examined: Cheats and Impoſtures only fear and avoid a Scrutiny. As for my Part, I declare the Scripture to be the only Rule of my Faith and Religion: And that Part of my Religion, that is not to be ſupported by Scripture, by the Word of God delivered to us by Jeſus Chriſt and his Apoſtles, I will willingly part with as ſpurious, and introduced by Prieſt-craft, Tradition and Ignorance.

As for the Church of *England*, it was eſtabliſhed by the Conſent and Approbation of the Majority of the Chriſtians of this Kingdom upon the Reformation, but nothing is perfect at the beginning. Men could not at once ſee every Thing: It is a Government, and Form of Worſhip eſtabliſhed by Act of Parliament; yet there is no doubt of it, but it wants a further Reformation: But as it is, certainly there is no diſtinct and ſeparate Congregation, that can compare with the Divines of the Church of *England* for their Learning, or with the Church for its Forms and Worſhip. The Diſſenter upbraids the Churchman for preaching for Hire. The Churchmen upbraid them for preaching without an Apoſtolical Miſſion, to ſupport Party and Faction. I ſhall ſay with the Apoſtle on this occaſion, ſo Chriſt is preached and Men are edified, I ſhall be ſatisfied. I could wiſh that Men would at laſt grow wiſe, and leave off their idle Controverſies and fooliſh Diſputes, and become Chriſtians indeed, loving one another, as Chriſtians ought.

All our Heats and Diſputes proceed from Arrogance, Pride and Emulation, the Parents of Hatred and Contention. In Perſecuting Men loſe one great Advantage, the ſtrength of their Arguments; for Men can never be well taught, perſuaded or convinced by Arguments offered by their Enemies and Perſecutors: It is natural for Men to hate and avoid thoſe that abuſe and injure them, eſpecially for their Religion, which is generally moſt dear to them. Men may certainly be eaſier prevailed upon by the perſuaſive Arguments of a Friend, that they believe loves and regards them.

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To illuſtrate the Original of our Diviſions; you may obſerve, if there is a *Jew* or a *Turk* amongſt us, we never try by Reſtraints and Penalties, by Fire or Terrors to make them become Chriſtians: But if a Chriſtian ſwerves but ever ſo little from us in the minuteſt Matters, he is ſure to find no Quarter. Certainly this Practice is not warranted by Scripture: I never read there, that we were ordered to convert any ſort of Men by thoſe Methods, or that a *Turk* or a *Jew* ſhould find more Favour with us than a miſtaken Chriſtian: But the Reaſon with little Thought is obvious; we never fear their teaching in Chriſt's Name, nor did we ever expect that they ſhould follow us: But we find, that the miſtaken Chriſtian teaches and preaches in the Name we do, or follows thoſe that do not follow us: And we fear in time, that they may leſſen our Authority, and contend for Superiority.

You that forget God, and aim at the Riches and Grandeur of this World, conſider the 36th *verſe* of the 8th *Chapter* of St. *Mark*, *What ſhall it profit a Man, if he get the whole World, and loſe his own Soul?* This Deſire of Rule and Dominion is bred and born with Men, and continues with them until they are become new Creatures, and regenerated by Grace: You may obſerve in the Ninth *Chapter* of St. *Mark*, how the Diſciples contended about Precedency, *viz.* who ſhould be the greateſt; and all our Diſputes (let our Pretences be ever ſo fair and ſpecious) have a look and a tendency that Way. You may find in the next *Chapter*, St. *John*, being jealous of others aſſuming to themſelves an equal Authority with the Diſciples, complains to our Saviour in theſe Words, *We ſaw*

one casting out Devils in thy Name, and he followeth not us, and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. Our Saviour said, *Forbid him not, for there is none that shall do a Miracle in my Name that can lightly speak evil of me; for he that is not against us, is on our Part.*

I can never reflect or think of this Place of Scripture, but it brings to my Thoughts the Meaning and Cause of all our Disputes, Differences and Quarrels. Miracles are ceased; and Men are so far from casting Devils out of others, that they can hardly keep them out of themselves. And as Miracles are ceased, so there is no more that Men can do to demonstrate that they are Christ's Disciples, than by preaching Christ, and by persuading Men to repent and lead new Lives. And yet for all this, I dare say, and affirm it, that if Men that followed not us should teach and preach the Doctrines of Christ, many of us, like the Disciples before they were inspired, would forbid them: And if we consulted truly our own Hearts, we should find the Reason to be, because they followed not us. How much have we deviated from our Saviour's Rule, and placed our Religion mostly in Distinctions, in Names and Sects? In the sixth *Chapter* of St. *Luke*, verse 27. *But I say unto you which hear, Love your Enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despightfully use you.* It is true, we read the same Testament in our Churches and Houses, and we have the same Instructions our Saviour gave his Disciples: But I leave it to every Man's Conscience to consider and examine, how well we practise it. Tho' our Brother Christian treats us with all the Modesty and Respect imaginable: And though by his Riches, Numbers and Friends, he hath in

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the Day of our Diſtreſs aſſiſted us; yet I refer it to every one's Obſervation, if he will not follow us, whether we do not uſe him ſomething worſe, than our Saviour has permitted us to uſe our worſt Enemies? Obſerve the 46th *verſe* of the ſame *Chapter, Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the Things which I ſay? Ye know not what Spirit ye are of.*

I ſhall conclude this Diſcourſe with Directions, how to try and guide your Spirits; and that ſhall be from the Rule given us, St. *Mark* xii. 30, 31. *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind, and with all thy Strength, this is the firſt Commandment. And the ſecond is like, namely this, Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf. There is no other Commandment greater than theſe.*

O God of all Mercy and Love, Grant that we may love Thee above all Things; grant that we may love one another, and live in Love and Peace free from perſecuting, or from being perſecuted: Grant that we may live in thy Peace and Fear, and die in thy Favour, and live with Thee, when Time ſhall be no more!

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